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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

DARLENE WILLIS,

Plaintiff,

vs.

COSTCO WHOLESALE CORP., and  
DOES 1-10,

Defendants.

CASE NO. 2:24-cv-04155-FMO-JC

**STIPULATED PROTECTIVE  
ORDER FOR STANDARD  
LITIGATION**

**[CHANGES MADE BY COURT TO  
PARAGRAPHS 3, 6, 2(B), 7.1, 7.3, 9,  
10]**

The Court, having received the STIPULATED PROTECTIVE ORDER FOR STANDARD LITIGATION, executed by Plaintiffs DARLENE WILLIS (“Plaintiff”) and Defendant COSTCO WHOLESALE CORPORATION (“Costco” or “Defendant,” collectively “the Parties”), having considered the representations set forth therein, and finding good cause thereof, orders as follows:

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**PURSUANT TO STIPULATION AND FOR GOOD CAUSE SHOWN,**  
**A PROTECTIVE ORDER IS ENTERED AS FOLLOWS:**

**1. PURPOSES AND LIMITATIONS**

Disclosure and discovery activity in this action are likely to involve production of confidential, proprietary, or private information for which special protection from public disclosure and from use for any purpose other than prosecuting this litigation may be warranted. Accordingly, the Court enters the following Stipulated Protective Order. The Parties acknowledge that this Order does not confer blanket protections on all disclosures or responses to discovery and that the protection it affords from public disclosure and use extends only to the limited information or items that are entitled to confidential treatment under the applicable legal principles. The Parties further acknowledge, as set forth in Section 13.3, below, that this Stipulated Protective Order does not entitle them to file confidential information under seal; the applicable Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and local rule must be followed and the standards that will be applied when a party seeks permission from the court to file material under seal.

**2. DEFINITIONS**

2.1 Challenging Party: a Party or Non-Party that challenges the designation of information or items under this Order.

2.2 “CONFIDENTIAL” Information or Items: information (regardless of how it is generated, stored or maintained) or tangible things that qualify for protection under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(c).

2.3 Counsel (without qualifier): Outside Counsel of Record and House Counsel (as well as their support staff).

2.4 Designating Party: a Party or Non-Party that designates information or items that it produces in disclosures or in responses to discovery as “CONFIDENTIAL.”

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2.5 Disclosure or Discovery Material: all items or information, regardless of the medium or manner in which it is generated, stored, or maintained (including, among other things, testimony, transcripts, and tangible things), that are produced or generated in disclosures or responses to discovery in this matter.

2.6 Expert: a person with specialized knowledge or experience in a matter pertinent to the litigation who has been retained by a Party or its counsel to serve as an expert witness or as a consultant in this action.

2.7 House Counsel: attorneys who are employees of a party to this action. House Counsel does not include Outside Counsel of Record or any other outside counsel.

2.8 Non-Party: any natural person, partnership, corporation, association, or other legal entity not named as a Party to this action.

2.9 Outside Counsel of Record: attorneys who are not employees of a party to this action but are retained to represent or advise a party to this action and have appeared in this action on behalf of that party or are affiliated with a law firm which has appeared on behalf of that party.

2.10 Party: any party to this action, including all of its officers, directors, employees, consultants, retained experts, and Outside Counsel of Record (and their support staffs).

2.11 Producing Party: a Party or Non-Party that produces Disclosure or Discovery Material in this action.

2.12 Professional Vendors: persons or entities that provide litigation support services (e.g., photocopying, videotaping, translating, preparing exhibits or demonstrations, and organizing, storing, or retrieving data in any form or medium) and their employees and subcontractors.

2.13 Protected Material: any Disclosure or Discovery Material that is designated as "CONFIDENTIAL."

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2.14 Receiving Party: a Party that receives Disclosure or Discovery Material from a Producing Party.

### 3. SCOPE

The protections conferred by this Stipulation and Order cover not only Protected Material (as defined above), but also (1) any information copied or extracted from Protected Material; (2) all copies, excerpts, summaries, or compilations of Protected Material; and (3) any testimony, conversations, or presentations by Parties or their Counsel that might reveal Protected Material other than during a court hearing or at trial. However, the protections conferred by this Stipulation and Order do not cover the following information: (a) any information that is in the public domain at the time of disclosure to a Receiving Party or becomes part of the public domain after its disclosure to a Receiving Party as a result of publication not involving a violation of this Order, including becoming part of the public record through trial or otherwise; and (b) any information known to the Receiving Party prior to the disclosure or obtained by the Receiving Party after the disclosure from a source who obtained the information lawfully and under no obligation of confidentiality to the Designating Party. Any use of Protected Material during a court hearing or at trial shall be governed by the orders of the presiding judge. This Order does not govern the use of Protected Material during a court hearing or at trial.

### 4. GOOD CAUSE STATEMENT

This action is likely to involve trade secrets, internally developed policies and procedures, confidential logs and business records, and other valuable research, development, commercial, technical, or proprietary information for which special protection from public disclosure and from use for any purpose other than prosecution of this action is warranted. Such confidential and proprietary materials and information consist of, among other things, confidential business or financial information, information regarding confidential business practices

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(including standards, procedures, and documents developed internally by the parties), or other confidential research, development or commercial information (including information implicating privacy rights of third parties), information otherwise generally unavailable to the public, or which may be privileged or otherwise protected from disclosure under state or federal statutes, court rules, case decisions, or common law. Such information and documents include business records and work logs developed, researched, drafted, created, and/or prepared internally by the Parties for use in their business or trade; internal policies and procedures; confidential communications, documents, or information involving private or personal information of the parties or third parties; and/or documents marked confidential and not made available for the public at large. Accordingly, to expedite the flow of information, to facilitate the prompt resolution of disputes over confidentiality of discovery materials, to adequately protect information the parties are entitled to keep confidential, to ensure that the parties are permitted reasonable necessary uses of such material in preparation for and in the conduct of trial, to address their handling at the end of the litigation, and serves the ends of justice, a protective order for such information is justified in this matter. It is the intent of the Parties that information will not be designated as confidential for tactical reasons and that nothing be so designated without a good faith belief that it has been maintained in a confidential, non-public manner, and there is good cause why it should not be part of the public record of this case.

## **5. DURATION**

Even after final disposition of this litigation, the confidentiality obligations imposed by this Order shall remain in effect until a Designating Party agrees otherwise in writing or a court order otherwise directs. Final disposition shall be deemed to be the later of (1) dismissal of all claims and defenses in this action, with or without prejudice; and (2) final judgment herein after the completion and exhaustion of all appeals, rehearings, remands, trials, or reviews of this action,

1 including the time limits for filing any motions or applications for extension of  
2 time pursuant to applicable law.

3 **6. DESIGNATING PROTECTED MATERIAL**

4 6.1 Exercise of Restraint and Care in Designating Material for Protection.  
5 Each Party or Non-Party that designates information or items for protection under  
6 this Order must take care to limit any such designation to specific material that  
7 qualifies under the appropriate standards. The Designating Party must designate for  
8 protection only those parts of material, documents, items, or oral or written  
9 communications that qualify – so that other portions of the material, documents,  
10 items, or communications for which protection is not warranted are not swept  
11 unjustifiably within the ambit of this Order.

12 Mass, indiscriminate, or routinized designations are prohibited. Designations  
13 that are shown to be clearly unjustified or that have been made for an improper  
14 purpose (e.g., to unnecessarily encumber or retard the case development process or  
15 to impose unnecessary expenses and burdens on other parties) expose the  
16 Designating Party to sanctions.

17 If it comes to a Designating Party's attention that information or items that it  
18 designated for protection do not qualify for protection, that Designating Party must  
19 promptly notify all other Parties that it is withdrawing the mistaken designation.

20 6.2 Manner and Timing of Designations. Except as otherwise provided in  
21 this Order (see, e.g., second paragraph of section 6.2(a) below), or as otherwise  
22 stipulated or ordered, Disclosure or Discovery Material that qualifies for protection  
23 under this Order must be clearly so designated before the material is disclosed or  
24 produced.

25 Designation in conformity with this Order requires:

- 26 (a) for information in documentary form (e.g., paper or electronic  
27 documents, but excluding transcripts of depositions or other pretrial or  
28 trial proceedings), that the Producing Party affix the legend

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1 “CONFIDENTIAL” to each page that contains protected material. If  
2 only a portion or portions of the material on a page qualifies for  
3 protection, the Producing Party also must clearly identify the  
4 protected portion(s) (e.g., by making appropriate markings in the  
5 margins).

6 A Party or Non-Party that makes original documents or materials  
7 available for inspection need not designate them for protection until  
8 after the inspecting Party has indicated which material it would like  
9 copied and produced. During the inspection and before the  
10 designation, all of the material made available for inspection shall be  
11 deemed “CONFIDENTIAL.” After the inspecting Party has identified  
12 the documents it wants copied and produced, the Producing Party  
13 must determine which documents, or portions thereof, qualify for  
14 protection under this Order. Then, before producing the specified  
15 documents, the Producing Party must affix the “CONFIDENTIAL”  
16 legend to each page that contains Protected Material. If only a portion  
17 or portions of the material on a page qualifies for protection, the  
18 Producing Party also must clearly identify the protected portion(s)  
19 (e.g., by making appropriate markings in the margins).

20 (b) for testimony given in deposition that the Designating Party  
21 identifies on the record, before the close of the deposition.

22 (c) for information produced in some form other than documentary  
23 and for any other tangible items, that the Producing Party affix in a  
24 prominent place on the exterior of the container or containers in which  
25 the information or item is stored the legend “CONFIDENTIAL.” If  
26 only a portion or portions of the information or item warrant  
27 protection, the Producing Party, to the extent practicable, shall  
28 identify the protected portion(s).



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1           6.3 Inadvertent Failures to Designate. If timely corrected, an inadvertent  
2 failure to designate qualified information or items does not, standing alone, waive  
3 the Designating Party's right to secure protection under this Order for such  
4 material. Upon timely correction of a designation, the Receiving Party must make  
5 reasonable efforts to assure that the material is treated in accordance with the  
6 provisions of this Order.

7       **7. CHALLENGING CONFIDENTIALITY DESIGNATIONS**

8           7.1 Timing of Challenges. Any Party or Non-Party may challenge a  
9 designation of confidentiality at any time consistent with the District Judge's  
10 Scheduling Order. Unless a prompt challenge to a Designating Party's  
11 confidentiality designation is necessary to avoid foreseeable, substantial  
12 unfairness, unnecessary economic burdens, or a significant disruption or delay of  
13 the litigation, a Party does not waive its right to challenge a confidentiality  
14 designation by electing not to mount a challenge promptly after the original  
15 designation is disclosed.

16           7.2 Meet and Confer. The Challenging Party shall initiate the dispute  
17 resolution process by providing written notice of each designation it is challenging  
18 and describing the basis for each challenge. To avoid ambiguity as to whether a  
19 challenge has been made, the written notice must recite that the challenge to  
20 confidentiality is being made in accordance with this specific paragraph of the  
21 Protective Order. The parties shall attempt to resolve each challenge in good faith  
22 and must begin the process by conferring directly (in voice to voice dialogue; other  
23 forms of communication are not sufficient) within 14 days of the date of service of  
24 notice. In conferring, the Challenging Party must explain the basis for its belief that  
25 the confidentiality designation was not proper and must give the Designating Party  
26 an opportunity to review the designated material, to reconsider the circumstances,  
27 and, if no change in designation is offered, to explain the basis for the chosen  
28 designation. A Challenging Party may proceed to the next stage of the challenge



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1 process only if it has engaged in this meet and confer process first or establishes  
2 that the Designating Party is unwilling to participate in the meet and confer process  
3 in a timely manner.

4 7.3 Judicial Intervention. If the Parties cannot resolve a challenge without  
5 court intervention, the Designating Party shall file and serve a motion to retain  
6 confidentiality within 21 days of the initial notice of challenge or within 14 days of  
7 the parties agreeing that the meet and confer process will not resolve their dispute,  
8 whichever is earlier. Each such motion must be accompanied by a competent  
9 declaration affirming that the movant has complied with the meet and confer  
10 requirements imposed in the preceding paragraph. Failure by the Designating Party  
11 to make such a motion including the required declaration within 21 days (or 14  
12 days, if applicable) shall automatically waive the confidentiality designation for  
13 each challenged designation. In addition, the Challenging Party may file a motion  
14 challenging a confidentiality designation at any time consistent with the District  
15 Judge's Scheduling Order if there is good cause for doing so, including a challenge  
16 to the designation of a deposition transcript or any portions thereof. Any motion  
17 brought pursuant to this provision must be accompanied by a competent  
18 declaration affirming that the movant has complied with the meet and confer  
19 requirements imposed by the preceding paragraph.

20 The burden of persuasion in any such challenge proceeding shall be on the  
21 Designating Party. Frivolous challenges, and those made for an improper purpose  
22 (e.g., to harass or impose unnecessary expenses and burdens on other parties) may  
23 expose the Challenging Party to sanctions. Unless the Designating Party has  
24 waived the confidentiality designation by failing to file a motion to retain  
25 confidentiality as described above, all parties shall continue to afford the material  
26 in question the level of protection to which it is entitled under the Producing  
27 Party's designation until the court rules on the challenge.

28 ///

**8. ACCESS TO AND USE OF PROTECTED MATERIAL**

8.1 Basic Principles. A Receiving Party may use Protected Material that is disclosed or produced by another Party or by a Non-Party in connection with this case only for prosecuting, defending, or attempting to settle this litigation. Such Protected Material may be disclosed only to the categories of persons and under the conditions described in this Order. When the litigation has been terminated, a Receiving Party must comply with the provisions of section 14 below (FINAL DISPOSITION).

Protected Material must be stored and maintained by a Receiving Party at a location and in a secure manner that ensures that access is limited to the persons authorized under this Order.

8.2 Disclosure of “CONFIDENTIAL” Information or Items. Unless otherwise ordered by the court or permitted in writing by the Designating Party, a Receiving Party may disclose any information or item designated “CONFIDENTIAL” only to:

(a) the Receiving Party’s Outside Counsel of Record in this action, as well as employees of said Outside Counsel of Record to whom it is reasonably necessary to disclose the information for this litigation and who have signed the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound” that is attached hereto as Exhibit A;

(b) the officers, directors, and employees (including House Counsel) of the Receiving Party to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary for this litigation and who have signed the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound” (Exhibit A);

(c) Experts (as defined in this Order) of the Receiving Party to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary for this litigation and who have signed the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound” (Exhibit A);

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(d) the court and its personnel;

(e) court reporters and their staff, professional jury or trial consultants, mock jurors, and Professional Vendors to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary for this litigation and who have signed the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound” (Exhibit A);

(f) during their depositions, witnesses in the action to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary and who have signed the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound” (Exhibit A), unless otherwise agreed by the Designating Party or ordered by the court. Pages of transcribed deposition testimony or exhibits to depositions that reveal Protected Material must be separately bound by the court reporter and may not be disclosed to anyone except as permitted under this Stipulated Protective Order.

(g) the author or recipient of a document containing the information or a custodian or other person who otherwise possessed or knew the information.

**9. PROTECTED MATERIAL SUBPOENAED OR ORDERED PRODUCED IN OTHER LITIGATION**

If a Party is served with a subpoena or a court order issued in other litigation that compels disclosure of any information or items designated in this action as “CONFIDENTIAL,” that Party must:

(a) promptly notify in writing the Designating Party. Such notification shall include a copy of the subpoena or court order;

(b) promptly notify in writing the party who caused the subpoena or order to issue in the other litigation that some or all of the material covered by the subpoena or order is subject to this Protective Order. Such notification shall include a copy of this Stipulated Protective

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Order; and

(c) cooperate with respect to all reasonable procedures sought to be pursued by the Designating Party whose Protected Material may be affected.

If the Designating Party timely seeks a protective order, the Party served with the subpoena or court order shall not produce any information designated in this action as “CONFIDENTIAL” before a determination by the court from which the subpoena or order issued, unless the Party has obtained the Designating Party’s permission or unless otherwise required by the law or court order. The Designating Party shall bear the burden and expense of seeking protection in that court of its confidential material – and nothing in these provisions should be construed as authorizing or encouraging a Receiving Party in this action to disobey a lawful directive from another court.

**10. A NON-PARTY’S PROTECTED MATERIAL SOUGHT TO BE PRODUCED IN THIS LITIGATION**

(a) The terms of this Order are applicable to information produced by a Non-Party in this action and designated as “CONFIDENTIAL.” Such information produced by Non-Parties in connection with this litigation is protected by the remedies and relief provided by this Order. Nothing in these provisions should be construed as prohibiting a Non-Party from seeking additional protections.

(b) In the event that a Party is required, by a valid discovery request, to produce a Non-Party’s confidential information in its possession, and the Party is subject to an agreement with the Non-Party not to produce the Non-Party’s confidential information, then the Party shall:

(1) promptly notify in writing the Requesting Party and the Non-Party that some or all of the information requested is subject to a confidentiality agreement with a Non-Party;

(2) promptly provide the Non-Party with a copy of the Stipulated

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Protective Order in this litigation, the relevant discovery request(s),  
and a reasonably specific description of the information requested;  
and

(3) make the information requested available for inspection by the  
Non-Party.

(c) If the Non-Party fails to object or seek a protective order from this court  
within 14 days of receiving the notice and accompanying information, the  
Receiving Party may produce the Non-Party's confidential information responsive  
to the discovery request. If the Non-Party timely seeks a protective order, the  
Receiving Party shall not produce any information in its possession or control that  
is subject to the confidentiality agreement with the Non-Party before a  
determination by the court unless otherwise required by the law or court order.  
Absent a court order to the contrary, the Non-Party shall bear the burden and  
expense of seeking protection in this court of its Protected Material.

#### **11. UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURE OF PROTECTED MATERIAL**

If a Receiving Party learns that, by inadvertence or otherwise, it has  
disclosed Protected Material to any person or in any circumstance not authorized  
under this Stipulated Protective Order, the Receiving Party must immediately (a)  
notify in writing the Designating Party of the unauthorized disclosures, (b) use its  
best efforts to retrieve all unauthorized copies of the Protected Material, (c) inform  
the person or persons to whom unauthorized disclosures were made of all the terms  
of this Order, and (d) request such person or persons to execute the  
"Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound" that is attached hereto as Exhibit  
A.

#### **12. INADVERTENT PRODUCTION OF PRIVILEGED OR OTHERWISE PROTECTED MATERIAL**

When a Producing Party gives notice to Receiving Parties that certain  
inadvertently produced material is subject to a claim of privilege or other

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1 protection, the obligations of the Receiving Parties are those set forth in Federal  
2 Rule of Civil Procedure 26(b)(5)(B). This provision is not intended to modify  
3 whatever procedure may be established in an e-discovery order that provides for  
4 production without prior privilege review. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Evidence  
5 502(d) and (e), insofar as the parties reach an agreement on the effect of disclosure  
6 of a communication or information covered by the attorney-client privilege or  
7 work product protection, the parties may incorporate their agreement in the  
8 stipulated protective order submitted to the court.

9 **13. MISCELLANEOUS**

10 13.1 Right to Further Relief. Nothing in this Order abridges the right of any  
11 person to seek its modification by the court in the future.

12 13.2 Right to Assert Other Objections. By stipulating to the entry of this  
13 Protective Order no Party waives any right it otherwise would have to object to  
14 disclosing or producing any information or item on any ground not addressed in  
15 this Stipulated Protective Order. Similarly, no Party waives any right to object on  
16 any ground to use in evidence of any of the material covered by this Protective  
17 Order.

18 13.3 Filing Protected Material. Without written permission from the  
19 Designating Party or a court order secured after appropriate notice to all interested  
20 persons, a Party may not file in the public record in this action any Protected  
21 Material. A Party that seeks to file under seal any Protected Material must comply  
22 with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the applicable local rule. Protected  
23 Material may only be filed under seal pursuant to a court order authorizing the  
24 sealing of the specific Protected Material at issue. Pursuant to Federal Rules of  
25 Civil Procedure and the applicable local rule, a sealing order will issue only upon a  
26 request establishing that the Protected Material at issue is privileged, protectable as  
27 a trade secret, or otherwise entitled to protection under the law. If a Receiving  
28 Party's request to file Protected Material under seal pursuant to Federal Rules of

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Civil Procedure and the applicable local rule is denied by the court, then the Receiving Party may file the information in the public record pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the applicable local rule unless otherwise instructed by the court.

#### **14. FINAL DISPOSITION**

Within 60 days after the final disposition of this action, as defined in paragraph 4, each Receiving Party must return all Protected Material to the Producing Party or destroy such material. As used in this subdivision, “all Protected Material” includes all copies, abstracts, compilations, summaries, and any other format reproducing or capturing any of the Protected Material. Whether the Protected Material is returned or destroyed, the Receiving Party must submit a written certification to the Producing Party (and, if not the same person or entity, to the Designating Party) by the 60 day deadline that (1) identifies (by category, where appropriate) all the Protected Material that was returned or destroyed and (2) affirms that the Receiving Party has not retained any copies, abstracts, compilations, summaries or any other format reproducing or capturing any of the Protected Material. Notwithstanding this provision, Counsel are entitled to retain an archival copy of all pleadings, motion papers, trial, deposition, and hearing transcripts, legal memoranda, correspondence, deposition and trial exhibits, expert reports, attorney work product, and consultant and expert work product, even if such materials contain Protected Material. Any such archival copies that contain or constitute Protected Material remain subject to this Protective Order as set forth in Section 5 (DURATION).

#### **IT IS SO ORDERED AS MODIFIED.**

Dated: December 31, 2024

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
Hon. Jacqueline Chooljian  
United States Magistrate Judge



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**EXHIBIT A**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT TO BE BOUND**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full name], of  
\_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full address], declare  
under penalty of perjury that I have read in its entirety and understand the  
Stipulated Protective Order that was issued by the United States District Court  
for the Central District of California on December 31, 2024 in the case of Darlene  
Willis v. Costco Wholesale Corp., et al., Case No. 2:24-cv-04155-FMO-JC. I  
agree to comply with and to be bound by all the terms of this Stipulated  
Protective Order and I understand and acknowledge that failure to so comply  
could expose me to sanctions and punishment in the nature of contempt. I  
solemnly promise that I will not disclose in any manner any information or  
item that is subject to this Stipulated Protective Order to any person or entity  
except in strict compliance with the provisions of this Order.

I further agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the United States  
District Court for the Central District of California for the purpose of enforcing  
the terms of this Stipulated Protective Order, even if such enforcement  
proceedings occur after termination of this action.

I hereby appoint \_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full  
name] of \_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full  
address and telephone number] as my California agent for service of process in  
connection with this action or any proceedings related to enforcement of  
this Stipulated Protective Order.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

City and State where sworn and signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_